

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00

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R 101610Z OCT 75

FM AMEMBASSY VIENNA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6878

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMCONSUL SALZBURG

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E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: PINT AU

SUBJECT: FREEDOM PARTY CHAIRMAN'S SERVICE IN NOTORIOUS  
SS INFANTRY UNIT REVEALED

1. BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED. BEGIN SUMMARY: AUSTRIAN FREEDOM  
PARTY CHAIRMAN PETER MAY BE REPLACED EARLIER THAN EXPECTED  
AS RESULT OF JEWISH DOCUMENTS CENTER REVELATION THAT HE  
SERVED IN SS UNIT RESPONSIBLE FOR DEATHS OF THOUSANDS OF  
NON-COMBATANTS IN USSR. END SUMMARY.

2. VIENNA JEWISH DOCUMENTATION CENTER CHIEF WIESENTHAL  
TOSSED MINOR BOMBSHELL ON AUSTRIAN DOMESTIC POLITICAL  
LANDSCAPE OCTOBER 9 WHEN HE TOLD PRESS THAT HE HAD  
RECENTLY UNCOVERED DOCUMENTS WHICH REVEALED THAT  
FRIEDRICH PETER, CHAIRMAN OF AUSTRIA'S SMALL, NATIONAL  
LIBERAL RIGHT-WING FREEDOM PARTY (FPO), HAD SERVED IN  
1ST SS INFANTRY BRIGADE IN 1941-42 WHEN THAT UNIT WAS  
RESPONSIBLE FOR DEATHS OF OVER TEN THOUSAND WOMEN,  
CHILDREN, AND JEWS DURING OPERATIONS BEHIND FRONT LINES  
IN SOVIET UNION. DOCUMENTS INDICATED PETER HAD  
RECEIVED IRON CROSS 2ND CLASS FOR NON-COMMISSIONED  
SERVICE WITH UNIT BEFORE HE WAS COMMISSIONED AND HAD  
SERVED FROM 1943 TO 1945, AS WAS ALREADY KNOWN, IN  
2ND SS PANZER DIVISION IN SOVIET UNION.

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3. WIESENTHAL SAID THAT HE HAD NO INFORMATION THAT LINKED PETER PERSONALLY WITH ANY ATROCITIES AND THAT MATERIAL HE HAD WAS NOT SUFFICIENT TO WARRANT PROSECUTION. HE REPORTED HAD DECIDED TO WITHHOLD THE INFORMATION FROM PUBLIC UNTIL NOW IN ORDER TO AVOID HAVING IT BECOME CONTENTIOUS ISSUE IN ELECTION CAMPAIGN BUT THAT HE HAD GONE TO AUSTRIAN PRESIDENT WITH DOCUMENTS BEFORE OCTOBER 5 BALLOTING. ACCORDING TO WIESENTHAL, FRG AUTHORITIES HAVE SINCE BEEN INFORMED IN EFFORT TO SECURE MORE PRECISE INFORMATION ABOUT PETER'S SERVICE IN SS INFANTRY BRIGADE AND REASON FOR HIS AWARD. WIESENTHAL TOLD PRESS THAT WAR CRIMES TRIALS HAD DOCUMENTED ATROCITIES OF UNIT AND REVEALED THAT UNIT'S COMMANDERS WERE CAREFUL TO ENSURE THAT ALL UNIT MEMBERS, EVEN COOKS, PERSONALLY PARTICIPATED IN LIQUIDATIONS.

4. IN REPLY, PETER ADMITTED FOR FIRST TIME TO SERVICE IN 1ST SS INFANTRY UNIT BUT CATEGORICALLY DENIED THAT HE HAD ENGAGED IN ATROCITIES OR REPRISALS INVOLVING NON-COMBATANTS. HE SAID HE HAD DONE HIS DUTY AS A SOLDIER AND PARTICIPATED ONLY IN NORMAL "MOPPING UP" OPERATION AGAINST PARTISANS IN WAKE OF MILITARY ADVANCE. END UNCLASSIFIED.

5. BEGIN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE: COMMENT: PETER'S LEADERSHIP OF FPO WAS SERIOUSLY CHALLENGED IN NOVEMBER 1974 BUT HE WAS RETAINED LARGELY ON BASIS OF HIS GOOD RELATIONSHIP TO CHANCELLOR KREISKY AND PROBABILITY THAT FPO WOULD BE CALLED UPON TO FILL VICE CHANCELLORSHIP IN LIKELY SOCIALIST-FPO COALITION. SOCIALIST ABSOLUTE MAJORITY IN ELECTIONS, HOWEVER, PRECLUDED LATTER FROM HAPPENING. WIESENTHAL CHARGES, TOGETHER WITH RELTIVE POOR SHOWING OF FPO IN RECENT ELECTIONS, ARE LIKELY TO HASTEN PETER'S DEPARTURE FROM PARTY CHAIRMANSHIP. BUCHANAN

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## Message Attributes

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**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** WAR CRIMES, POLITICAL LEADERS, ALLEGATIONS, WW II, ELECTION CAMPAIGNS  
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**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 10 OCT 1975  
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**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
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**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
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**Document Unique ID:** 00  
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**TAGS:** PINT, AU, AUSTRIAN FREEDOM PARTY, (PETER, FRIEDRICH)  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
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